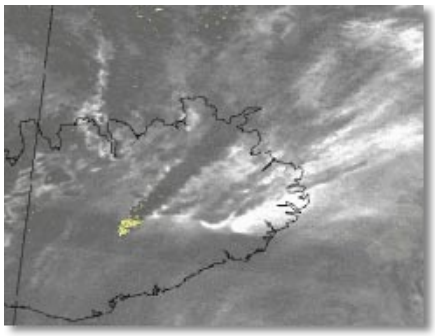
News release

Eruption of Grimsvötn, Iceland

Updated 5 November 2004

The recent eruption of Grimsvötn ceased around 1800 UTC on 4 November. The Icelandic Volcano Institute and Icelandic Meteorological Office will continue to monitor for further activity over the coming days. London VACC at the Met Office continues to monitor remnants of the eruption and is advising aviation as necessary.

Photo courtesy Fredrik Holm, Nordic Volcanological Center



The Met Office at Exeter is the Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre (VAAC) for part of the North Atlantic; an area which includes Iceland and the UK. Forecasters at the Met Office are currently alerting authorities and other interested parties to the possibility that the ash cloud could affect part of UK airspace through the next 24hours.

The ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) recognises a need to inform aircraft of the hazards posed by volcanoes, particularly the dangers of airborne volcanic ash. Ash can adversely effect visibility, and more importantly it interferes with aircraft performance when drawn in through the engine intakes, with the possibility of disastrous consequences.

In the event of an eruption, the responsible VAAC issues routine statements to the aviation community, detailing the latest position of the resulting ash plume and its expected movement during the subsequent 48 hours.

During an event, The Met Office liaise closely with the Icelandic Met service, who are themselves in close contact with the Nordic Volcano Institute. The Met Office is provided with the latest observational data as it emerges. This may be data from seismic surveys undertaken by the Nordic Institute, or eye witness accounts of current plume behaviour or volcanic activity. Often, visual observations originate from aviators in the vicinity. Satellite pictures also provide valuable information to trace and then track the plume. Complex detection systems have been developed to enable forecasters to more easily identify ash plumes from satellite imagery.

More about the Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre (VAAC)

Latest Europe visible satellite image

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